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Annual Report FY2015
VEGA
Farmer-to-Farmer Special Program Support Project

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Report on Activities During FY2015

(October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015)

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Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPACTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.....	3
Sub-Award Management.....	6
Farmer-to-Farmer Small Grant Projects.....	6
Lessons Learned from Farmer-to-Farmer Small Grants RFA 2015-1 and 2015-2	7
Farmer-to-Farmer Program Development Projects (PDPs).....	8
PDP: Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA)	8
PDP: Purdue University	8
PDP: Veterinarians without Borders	8
KNOWLEDGE MANGEMENT	9
Special Studies	9
Workshops.....	10
Seminars	10
F2F Web Portal	11
Outreach to USAID Missions.....	11
SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS.....	12
PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.....	12
M & E CERTIFICATION.....	12
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE	12

INTRODUCTION

This report marks the end of VEGA's second year as a Farmer-to-Farmer program implementer and covers the period from October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015. Over the past year we have:

- Launched three F2F PDPs.
- Awarded and launched five new F2F small grants.
- Managed, closed out and conducted exit interviews for four existing F2F small grants and developed a lessons learned document from the first phase of small grants.
- Launched the new program-wide website at farmer-to-farmer.org.
- Conducted site visits to the PDPs in Colombia and Jamaica.
- Organized and participated in Farmer-to-Farmer's annual Implementer's Meeting.
- Collaborated with USAID on making training recordings to train new program staff on the F2F standard indicators.
- Re-written our small grant and PDP RFA templates to provide evaluators with clearer guidance on what constitutes a high quality application.
- Conducted RFAs for F2F small grants in Serbia and Turkmenistan.
- Held two seminars, one on Field Visits Best Practices and Best Practices in Volunteer Safety and Security.
- Began work on the F2F MSO Advisory Committee.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPACTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over FY2015, the VEGA supported small grants and PDPs have deployed 103 volunteer assignments to Bangladesh, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco, Uganda and Zambia. These volunteers completed 2,212 volunteer days, donating an estimated \$1,039,640 worth of professional time. 84 volunteers were new to F2F.

A summary of VEGA's progress towards its VEGA-specific LOP impact targets appears below:

	FY2015 Actuals		FY2015 Targets		FY2015 Actual Total	FY 2015 Target Total
Standard F2F Indicator	Small Grants	PDP	Small Grants	PDP		
Purpose #1: Recruit and Support New F2F Implementing Partners						
Number of Sub-Awards Made	5	0	8	0	5	8
Amount of Grant Funds Disbursed	\$630,841	\$786,213	\$818,976	\$816,467	\$1,417,054	\$1,635,443
Number of Volunteers Fielded	41	62	60	43	103	103
Number of New Organizations to F2F	3	0	8	0	3	8
Number of New Volunteers to F2F	33	51	45	32	84	77
Number of New Countries to F2F	3	0	4	0	3	4
Number of New Hosts to F2F	4	79	8	9	83	17
Number of USAID Mission Buy Ins	0	0	-	1	0	1
Amount of USAID Mission Buy Ins	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$720,000	0	\$720,000

	FY2015	
	FY2015 Actuals	FY2015 Targets
Purpose #3: Strengthen Voluntary Technical Assistance for International Agriculture and Rural Development.		
Number of F2F Programs Assisted with Direct Technical Assistance from SPSP Staff	18	8
Best Practices Manual Updated	0	1
Number of Users of F2F Web Portal	4,362	200
Number of Workshops Completed	1	1
Number of Special Studies Completed	1	1
Number of Seminars Completed	2	2
Number of Knowledge Management Solutions Implemented and Maintained	0	1
Number of Best Practices Adopted	0	1

During the process of writing the FY2015 Semi-Annual report, USAID and VEGA added a new indicator: Number of Seminars Completed. To clarify: workshops are implementers meetings and the 30th Anniversary Event. Seminars are all other events e.g. brown bags, webinars etc. The

purpose of adding this indicator was to more accurately capture activities taking places through the F2F SPSP.

SUB-AWARD MANAGEMENT

FARMER-TO-FARMER SMALL GRANT PROJECTS

During FY2015, VEGA's nine small grant projects deployed 41 volunteers to Bangladesh, El Salvador, Haiti, Mali, Morocco and Zambia. These volunteers completed 733 volunteer days, donating an estimated \$344,510 worth of professional time. Please see Annex One for a breakdown of the small grant volunteer assignments.

Farmer-to-Farmer Small Grants RFA 2014-2

VEGA released RFA 2014-2 for Farmer-to-Farmer small grants on September 25, 2014. VEGA announced the RFA using its F2F mailing list, Facebook, Twitter¹ and on the vegaalliance.org website. Two of the six small grant awards were set aside for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Questions on the RFA were due October 16, 2014, and answers to these questions were released on October 20, 2014. Concept Papers for this RFA were due by October 27, 2014. Concept Papers were selected for advancement to the Full Applications stage on November 17, 2014. Full Applications for this RFA were due on December 22, 2014.

On or before December 22, 2014, VEGA received 27 eligible Concept Papers for the F2F small grants.

During the months of December 2014 and January 2015, VEGA assembled a proposal evaluation committee (PEC) to evaluate the applications. The six members of the PEC were briefed via e-mail regarding the review process and expectations. In January 2014, the PEC received the RFA, the scoring sheets, and the final list of Q&A prior to reviewing the applications.

The PEC received the Concept Papers on October 27, 2014, and was given until November 14, 2014, to review the Concept Papers and submit preliminary scores. On November 14, 2014, the PEC met and decided to advance the following 15 finalist organizations to the proposal stage: Africare, AgriCorps, Borlaug Institute at TAMU, Browse and Grass Growers Cooperative, the Western North Carolina Center for Honeybee Research, FAMU, Heart Song Farm, IESC, NCBA CLUSA, SAVE Travel Alliance, Tennessee State University, University of Arizona, Wisconsin Honey Producers Association, World Cocoa Foundation, World Link. During the proposal writing period, the Borlaug Institute withdrew their concept paper from consideration because they could not get a positive concurrence to their proposed project from the USAID mission in Indonesia. During the proposal writing period, World Link withdrew their concept paper from

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Farmer2Farmer> and farmertofarmer, respectively.

consideration because they could not get a positive concurrence to their proposed project from ACDI/VOCA, the incumbent core F2F implementer in Georgia.

On February 4, 2015, the VEGA SPSP PEC discussed the 13 finalist proposals for the VEGA F2F small grants, and recommended the proposals from Africare in Zambia, Browse and Grass Growers Cooperative in Mali, FAMU in Haiti, NCBA CLUSA in Zambia, Tennessee State University in Bangladesh, and University of Arizona in Tanzania and Kenya for funding based on their finding that the proposed projects had carefully thought through objectives and strong potential for impact. Both FAMU and Tennessee State University are MSIs. These Awards were issued as Fixed Amount Awards (FAA). Each award is \$150,000 with duration of one year. USAID concurred with the PEC's recommendations for FAAs to award on February 6, 2015. After USAID concurrence, VEGA proceeded to perform due diligence on the grantees. During the reporting period, VEGA signed grant awards with Africare, Browse and Grass Growers Cooperative, FAMU, NCBA CLUSA and Tennessee State University.

Farmer-to-Farmer Small Grants RFA 2015-1 and 2015-2

VEGA released RFA 2015-1 and RFA 2015-2 for Farmer-to-Farmer small grants in Serbia and Turkmenistan, respectively on July 6, 2015. VEGA announced the RFA using its F2F mailing list, Facebook, Twitter² and on the vegaalliance.org website. VEGA also announced the RFA to Serbian and Turkmen diaspora organizations, as well as international development organizations that are interested in either or both countries. Questions on the RFAs were due July 9, 2015. Concept Papers for this RFA were due by August 14, 2015. VEGA received no Concept Papers in response to either RFA. VEGA extended the deadline for Concept Papers to September 8, 2015, and conducted further outreach to prospective organizations interested in the RFA.

Unfortunately, despite this effort, VEGA did not receive any Concept Papers for either RFA. VEGA consulted with USAID DC and with the USAID missions in Serbia and Turkmenistan, and decided to give the core implementers the opportunity to conduct F2F volunteer assignments in Serbia and Turkmenistan on a flexible assignment basis, at the core implementers' expense. VEGA is available to advise the core implementers on its understanding of what the missions are looking for in an F2F program, but does not plan to participate actively in F2F implementation in Serbia and Turkmenistan.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FARMER-TO-FARMER SMALL GRANTS RFA 2015-1 AND 2015-2

Given the high levels of participation in VEGA's previous rounds of small grant and PDP grant making, the lack of response to RFAs 2015-1 and 2015-2 was surprising. Based on informal conversations with potential applicants, below are some hypotheses about the lack of responses to the Serbia and Turkmenistan RFAs.

1. The grants on offer were not large enough or over a long enough time to make them worthwhile for applicants that didn't already have a presence in Serbia or Turkmenistan.

² <https://www.facebook.com/Farmer2Farmer> and farmertofarmer, respectively.

2. Serbia and Turkmenistan do not have a great deal of USAID-funded agricultural development activity. Neither mission is a promising source of buy-in funds or other additional resources.
3. The pool of international development organizations that are eligible for a VEGA small grant and that are also interested in Serbia and Turkmenistan is very small.

FARMER-TO-FARMER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (PDPS)

VEGA supported the implementation of three PDPs in FY2015:

PDP: Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA)

FAVACA's three-year program focuses on the development of market-driven organic agricultural production in the parish of St. Thomas, Jamaica. FAVACA collaborates with local partners to ensure multi-layered sustainable practices across food systems, businesses, institutions, and organizations. Over the course of the initiative, FAVACA will place 70 U.S. professionals to train an estimated 2,500 individuals on various practices including water irrigation and management, distribution, and organic food systems. Based on over thirty years of experience and several development projects within Jamaica, FAVACA aims to empower local farmers in St. Thomas to address the number of environmental challenges and climate change issues that are hindering economic growth and crop production. Through increasing food security and enterprise profitability, this program will improve financial service and set the foundation for reproducible disaster-resistant agricultural environments.

PDP: Purdue University

Purdue University's project promotes rural development to support a sustainable and economically equitable peace in the Orinoquia region of Colombia, through integrated volunteer technical assistance. This will be accomplished by improved agricultural productivity through sustainable agricultural practices and natural resource management. Volunteers work with smallholder farmers so that they understand and be able to train others, strengthened regional agricultural economy through value-added processing and sustainable innovations along the value chain. Volunteers provide technical assistance in agricultural processing, product innovation, and marketing and creating new and strengthened networks support small farms and markets for local food systems.

PDP: Veterinarians without Borders

Veterinarians Without Borders Syndromic Surveillance for Livestock Health improves smallholder animal health and therefore nutrition through increased awareness of key diseases and how to control them in Ethiopia and Uganda. The project also increases awareness of trade-related and zoonotic diseases by creation of passive surveillance all along the value chain,

promote awareness and recognition of foreign animal diseases for US veterinarians and support existing USDA and USAID commitments to regional disease control to advance trade.

During FY2015, VEGA's three PDPs deployed 62 volunteers to Colombia, Ethiopia, Jamaica and Uganda. These volunteers completed 1,479 volunteer days, donating an estimated \$695,130 worth of professional time. VEGA staff also conducted support site visits of FAVACA and Purdue University's projects in Jamaica and Colombia. Mr. Wallace conducted training on the standard indicators and addressed questions and concerns regarding the program. For more information on PDP activities during the reporting period, please see their narrative reports and PDP indicator tables.

KNOWLEDGE MANGEMENT

During FY2015, VEGA participated in the F2F implementers meeting, helped create the Standard Indicator Training Recordings as a special study and held a two brown bag lunch learning events on *Field Visit Best Practices* and *Volunteer Safety and Security Best Practices*. The Standard Indicator Training Recordings and the brown bag lunch learning event on field visit best practices are described in detail in VEGA's FY2015 Semi-Annual Report.

SPECIAL STUDIES

MSO Advisory Committee

VEGA engaged Cultural Practice, LLC to serve on a committee to advise F2F on achieving two different but related objectives: i) how to increase the recruitment of minority F2F volunteers; and ii) how to expand engagement with Minority Serving Organizations (MSOs). MSOs are defined as MSIs and other organizations that are controlled by a board of directors or similar governing body with a membership of more than 50 percent Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, or other economically disadvantaged minorities. Per USAID's ADS Glossary, MSIs are Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities.³

This group is referred to as the MSO Advisory Committee. The MSO Advisory Committee is overseen by the F2F Outreach Committee and managed on a day-to-day basis by VEGA's F2F SPSP Director. The purpose of the committee is to provide guidance to VEGA and to the F2F program on increasing participation by minority populations and minority -based organizations (MSOs) in the program.

The MSO Advisory Committee consists of three people: Deborah Rubin of Cultural Practice, Sadie Paschke of Land O Lakes and Harriett Paul of FAMU. The committee is finalizing a work plan to be shared with the F2F Outreach Committee.

³ <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/glossary.pdf>

Standard Indicator Training Recording

Working closely with USAID Program Analyst Erin Baize, KDAD and the other members of the F2F Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, VEGA Program Director Eric Wallace played a lead role in creating a series of computer-based trainings on the F2F Standard Indicators. The trainings have four goals: for F2F staff to know what we are measuring; to ensure that all programs are measuring indicators similarly and consistently; to test program staff knowledge of the indicators; and to help program staff know what resources they have available to help them as they monitor and evaluate their programs. The trainings can be saved to writable media and do not require internet access to use. The trainings are available in the resources section of farmer-to-farmer.org, and VEGA has strongly encouraged its small grantees and PDP implementers to use them.

WORKSHOPS

F2F 30th Anniversary Event

Program Director Eric Wallace and Director of Communications Melisa Augusto served on the F2F 30th Anniversary Event planning committee. During the reporting period, VEGA arranged the 30th Anniversary event venue and refreshments and made logistical arrangements for presenter Ben Lough of the University of Illinois.

SEMINARS

Brown Bag on Best Practice in Field Visits

On March 12, 2015, VEGA held a brown bag event to give a presentation about the January 2015 site visit to the PDPs in Colombia and Jamaica. The presentation was followed by a discussion about best practices in headquarters visits to the field. Approximately fifteen people from the Farmer-to-Farmer community attended the Brown Bag event.

Brown Bag on Volunteer Safety

On May 14, 2015, VEGA held a Brown Bag Event on Volunteer Safety and Security. The event was attended by 19 people from the following organizations: ACDI-VICA, Browse and Grass Growers Cooperative, CNFA, CRS, IESC, Partners of the Americas, Purdue University and VEGA. Guided by a list of topic questions, attendees participated in an engaging discussion to share experiences, lessons learned and best practices. Some of the key lessons learned included:

- Allow the volunteer to make the decision if they feel safe in working in that country. If the volunteer is not comfortable, it will not be a successful trip
- Always have someone with the volunteer
- Link prospective volunteers with past volunteers. This is the best way for them to learn about F2F, the country, and ease any anxiety

- Rely on host staff to understand issues that HQ does not recognize
- Have volunteer sign an assumption of risk
- Some organizations do not allow volunteer to take vacation or extend on their own personal time in high risk areas
- Explain the “realities” of security situations
- Always have a record of next of kin in case the family needs to be informed
- Have a record of the volunteer’s blood type
- Have a proof of life for the volunteer
- If volunteers panic, best to remove them from the country because then they cannot perform their assignment
- Manage volunteer’s expectations, point them in the direction of other resources about the security risk
- Rehearsal of the emergency action plan is key, helps prepare staff and identify gap.
- Constant communication with the volunteer greatly eases fears and anxiety.

F2F WEB PORTAL

Farmer-to-Farmer.org is maturing into a useful resource in the areas of special studies, outreach to MSIs, and other knowledge management priorities. Farmer-to-Farmer.org currently hosts 73 different resource documents, including the online trainings on the F2F standard indicators. On average for the period of the second half of FY2015, Farmer-to-Farmer.org had 727 users and 1,587 page views per month. By comparison, VEGA’s organizational web site at vegaalliance.org had an average of 491 users and 534 page views per month during the same period.

OUTREACH TO USAID MISSIONS

In January 2015, as part of their trip to monitor PDP implementation, VEGA F2F Program Director Eric Wallace and F2F Program Associate Leia D’Amboise traveled to Colombia and Jamaica and informed USAID mission staff in both countries about buy-in opportunities available through the VEGA F2F program.

Additionally, VEGA’s non F2F staff conducted several visits to USAID missions around the world during which they have explained the buy in opportunities available under VEGA’s F2F program and encouraged missions to buy in. VEGA did not spend any F2F program funds on any of this outreach activity. In their outreach to countries that already have an incumbent F2F program, such as Georgia, VEGA staff have explained the difference between VEGA’s F2F program and the core implementers’ F2F programs.

VEGA also developed one-pagers which describe the benefits of buying into the SPSP program. A one-pager was also developed for each PDP which outlines the program and high lights program accomplishments.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

Based on funding restrictions, VEGA and USAID discussed the implications and impact on SPSP. As a result of these discussions, activities associated with the knowledge management portion of the program were scaled down to reflect the funding situation.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

1. Continue management, training and capacity building for small grants and PDPs.
2. Manage MSO Advisory Committee and supervise completion of its work products.
3. Conduct another small grant RFA, along with a webinar to inform potential grantees of opportunities available with F2F.
4. Continue outreach to USAID missions, especially those in countries that are hosting small grant and PDP activities, to encourage them to buy in to the program.
5. Continue to populate Farmer-to-Farmer.org with resources and monitor usage in order to strengthen the reach and capabilities of the site.
6. Plan and conduct the Farmer-to-Farmer 30th Anniversary Event and 2015 Implementers meeting, scheduled for December 3, 2015.
7. Conduct seminars on topics of interest to F2F implementers.
8. Conduct Lessons Learned I special study.

M & E CERTIFICATION

VEGA confirms that we have: a) used established indicators and definitions; b) participated in regular (annual) workshops reviewing indicators and M&E systems; and c) trained field staff on indicators and data collection systems. The above mentioned training sessions include extensive instruction in the collection and reporting of indicators.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

VEGA and its sub-awardees have conducted no volunteer assignments that have involved pesticides during the reporting period. We have no key findings or recommendations during the reporting period regarding limitations and successes of the PERSUAP and have no recommendations for technical assistance and training needed to improve pest and pesticide management practice. VEGA has taken no action to assess and disseminate lessons learned and best practices in F2F pesticide use and management during the reporting period, nor have we assessed priority pesticide management needs in the program at large. VEGA has identified no

knowledge gaps in pesticide safe use, IPM or other pesticide related issues at this time and has no recommendations regarding needed capacity strengthening.

	FY2014		FY2015		FY2016		FY2017		FY2018			
	FY2014 Actuals	FY2014 Targets	FY2015 Actuals	FY2015 Targets	FY2016 Actuals	FY2016 Targets	FY2017 Actuals	FY2017 Targets	FY2018 Actuals	FY2018 Targets	LOP Actual Total	LOP Target Total
Purpose #3: Strengthen Voluntary Technical Assistance for International Agriculture and Rural Development.												
Number of F2F Programs Assisted with Direct Technical Assistance from SPSP Staff	7	7	18	8		6		6	-	-	25	27
Best Practices Manual Updated	0	1									-	1
Number of Users of F2F Web Portal	0	175	4,362	200	-	150	-	150	-	-	4,362	675
Number of Workshops Completed	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	2	5
Number of Seminars Completed	1	1	2	2		7		5		2	3	17
Number of Special Studies Completed	2	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	-	2	3	7
Number of Knowledge Management Solutions Implemented and Maintained	0	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4
Number of Best Practices Adopted	0	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	4

